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DOWNEY

PEIPING, MAY 26-(REUTERS)--MRS. MARY DOWNEY OF NEW BRITAIN, CONN., AND HER SON WILLIAM TODAY TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO ARRANGE TO SEE COMMUNIST CHINESE OFFICIALS ABOUT AN EARLY RELEASE FOR HER SON JOHN, SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE FOR ESPIONAGE.

JOHN DOWNEY SAID HE AND HIS MOTHER SAW CHI FENG, HEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECTION OF THE COMMUNIST CHINESE RED CROSS ABOUT THE MATTER TODAY AFTER THEIR FINAL VISIT TO WILLIAM.

THE DOWNEYS WILL FLY TO CANTON TOMORROW AND THEN CROSS INTO HONG KONG MONDAY. FROM THERE THEY WILL RETURN TO NEW YORK "THE FASTEST WAY POSSIBLE."

THEY HAVE BEEN IN PEIPING FOR TWO WEEKS, VISITING JOHN FOR TWO HOURS ALMOST DAILY.

WILLIAM SAID CHI FENG TOLD THEM IT WAS AGAINST REGULATIONS FOR PRISONERS' FAMILIES TO SEE JUSTICE MINISTRY OFFICIALS, BUT THAT THE OFFICIALS HAD BEEN TOLD ABOUT THEIR INTEREST IN GETTING JOHN RELEASED.

"HE TOLD US THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAVE A GENERAL POLICY OF LENIENCY TOWARD PRISONERS AND EARLY RELEASE FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR AND THAT THERE WAS HOPE ON THAT SCORE," WILLIAM SAID.

HE SAID THAT ARRANGEMENTS THROUGH THE RED CROSS TO SUPPLY HIS BROTHER WITH BOOKS, FOOD AND CLOTHING WERE GOING SMOOTHLY.

JOHN DOWNEY, ONE OF FOUR AMERICANS IMPRISONED IN COMMUNIST CHINA, WAS A CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE OF THE U.S. ARMY CAPTURED WHEN IN 1952 WHEN THE PLANE IN WHICH HE WAS FLYING WAS SHOT DOWN OVER KOREA.

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